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ABSTRACT

This digest organizes the complex and interrelated issues concerned with student discipline into four questions, and suggests ways in which colleges and universities can deal with the issues raised. In answering the first question about what might be a proper role for institutions to play in student discipline, it suggests that an appropriate model might be based on the moral/ethical principles of preventing harm, upholding freedom, and fostering community. A second question asks where should institution begin in reconsidering student discipline, and the it is suggested that the use of honor codes to address the issue of student cheating might be a good place to begin, while another might be the establishment of a "citizenship curriculum" to foster a more moral community. To answer the third question concerning what we still need to learn, the report notes several ways in which institutions can measure the effectiveness of their student discipline efforts. And, finally, in addressing the question of how campuses should change, the report suggests that campus disciplinary/judicial systems address student discipline problems more by developmental methods than with the current adversarial system. (CH)

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From Discipline to Development
Rethinking Student Conduct in Higher Education

Michael Dannells

Student discipline has been a point of concern and contention for most of the history of higher education in the United States; today is no exception. Perhaps no other single subject so dramatically reflects our attitudes about students and how we define our duty and our relationship with them. From the earliest dissatisfactions with pious and moralistic paternalism in the colonial colleges, to recent controversies over hate speech versus First Amendment rights, student behavior and institutional responses have vexed faculty and administrators with a set of issues both fundamental and timely. Why do we concern ourselves with student behavior at all? What should be the "reach" of the institutions of higher education? What standards of behavior should colleges expect? How are those standards best communicated? By what processes should misconduct be adjudicated? If standards are broken, how should institutions respond? What is our overreaching purpose in student discipline? How do we know when it is met? Who should be responsible for it?

Student discipline comprises a set of complex and inter-related issues that deserve careful examination and reasonable recommendations. This report provides both, with an eye toward new trends in responding to and preventing student misconduct, and to programs that avoid unduly legalistic processes, while enhancing student development in the continuation of the institutional mission.

What role should colleges and universities play in student discipline?

Once student discipline was a central part of the college mission; today, it has moved to the periphery of most campus agendas. Since the demise of *in loco parentis*, most campuses have been left without a guiding reason for engaging in student discipline, and most faculty are, at best, only marginally involved in day-to-day matters of student conduct. Even campus administrators are ambivalent about their overall duty for student behavior.

Urgent present-day concerns about such behavioral problems as crime on campus, hate speech, date/acquaintance rape, alcohol (and other substance) abuse, and academic dishonesty, coupled with demands for greater supervision of students, the increasing litigiousness of a civil-liberty minded populace, as well as an increase in older, more consumer-oriented students, have left campus leaders understandably wary, while searching for new ways to fashion policy in this area. As a legacy of the student rights movement of the 1960s and 1970s, and the accompanying judicial scrutiny of disciplinary decisions, today's codes of conduct tend to be heavy on process and light on real guidance for the student. It is time for colleges and universities to rethink their purposes for engaging in student discipline and fashion rules and processes that follow logically. Hoekema (1994) has proposed a useful and thoughtful analytic framework and conceptual model for thinking about codes of conduct, based on three overarching moral/ethical principles: preventing harm, upholding freedom, and fostering community. Many campuses could benefit from a close consideration of this approach.

Where should institutions begin in reconsidering student discipline, and who should be involved?

Colleges and universities are urged to reconsider their approaches to student discipline by attempting to integrate the academic and nonacademic worlds of students through a broad-based, unified approach that demonstrates and reinforces the importance and integrity of institutional values. They should begin this process by reviewing and clarifying institutional values as they are already articulated in mission statements, codes of conduct, and academic integrity policies. Given the current high level of concern about student cheating, it may be the best and safest place to begin; few would argue with the academia's hand in this domain. Faculty, administrative and student affairs staff, and students should all be involved in a collaborative effort. Honor codes are in resurgence and should be carefully considered. There is a growing body of research that supports their efficacy, and while they are certainly not a panacea, the very process of considering an honor code should stimulate the kind of value-focused dialogue necessary for the campus to become a more moral community. Another good place to begin promoting such community building is in the curriculum. Astin (1995) recently proposed a "citizenship curriculum," which could foster the basic democratic values reinforcing and undergirding the campus disciplinary program. Many colleges and universities are instituting interdisciplinary courses to

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meet general education needs and to challenge the values of a materialistic, philosophic student body. Shouldn't there be room for a course, perhaps even a required course, that directly addresses student rights and responsibilities in the campus community?

What more do we need to learn about student discipline?

Although institutions of higher education in the United States have been engaged in the practice of student discipline for more than 300 years, we know surprisingly little about the effectiveness of our efforts. Research in student discipline should be conducted in three areas. First, institutional research should be done on existing disciplinary programs to determine their present effectiveness. Like any other student development program, these efforts should be periodically and systematically evaluated to ensure they are meeting their goals. The practice of disciplinary counseling should be of particular interest. It is a commonly employed response to student misbehavior, yet it has been questioned on the basis of ethics and efficacy. Second, student behavior, and how it is affected by the predominant student culture, its various subcultures, and how they compare to the faculty culture, should be studied. Conventional survey techniques, as well as qualitative methods, especially ethnographic, should be used to conduct "culture audits." Third, student development theories need to be operationalized and tested in the disciplinary context. If traditional quantitative methods do not seem to convey the richness of data needed by disciplinary practitioners, then qualitative methods should be encouraged. The case study method is a useful way of linking developmental theory to disciplinary practice, yet it is rare in the student personnel literature.

In what ways must campuses change to foster the development of disciplined students?

Colleges and universities and their students would benefit by thinking about student discipline in less adversarial and more developmental ways. Many disputes that now fill campus judicial systems might be better resolved through mediation. If disciplinary counseling is too problematic in the way we currently think about our disciplinary/judicial systems, perhaps we need to reframe our approach to include such methods as "caring confrontation," wherein the student's behavior is critically examined in a supportive relationship, and the central goal of the process is to see what can be learned from the situation, but not so much the determination of guilt and the application of punishment.

Student affairs leaders, and in particular the chief student affairs officer (CSAO) on campus, must actively and positively embrace their responsibility to encourage the building of moral/ethical communities on campus. The best student discipline program is the preventative type that creates a campus environment of caring and compassion, and one that deters hateful and destructive behavior by virtue of commitment to the community. One of the most effective ways to achieve the building of such a commitment is through service learning. College students, especially young college students, who have had the opportunity to learn about the needs of others through service to them, are far less likely to engage in the kinds of selfish and immature behaviors that account for the bulk of the disciplinary caseloads at most institutions. CSAOs, with their expertise in experiential learning, and with the opportunity to promote such programs though a myriad of student services, are in a unique position to contribute to the curriculum and promote the development of the whole student.

The importance of building more caring and collaborative communities of learning on our campuses has been a consistent theme in the literature on higher education for almost a decade. Student discipline can play a vital part, but first, institutions must clarify their values, and then campus leaders— including both academic affairs and student affairs—must take responsibility for developing disciplinary programs which are fair, humane, and uphold those values for the betterment of the individual student and for the community as a whole.

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